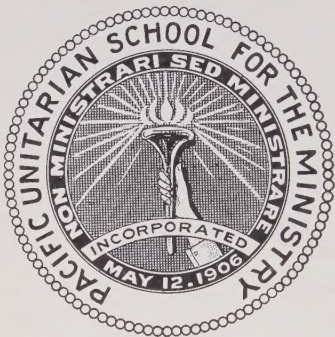


FOUNDER'S DAY AT HAMPTON



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Founder's Day
at
Hampton

Address at the
of
Samuel Chapman Armstrong,
by
Francis Greenwood Peabody

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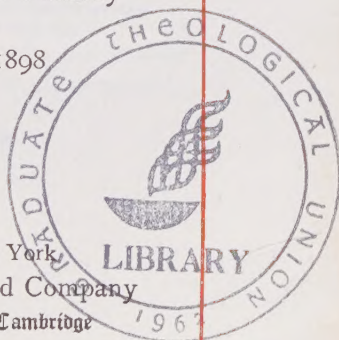
Founder's Day
at
Hampton

An Address in Memory
of
Samuel Chapman Armstrong
by
Francis Greenwood Peabody

January 30, 1898



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General Armstrong

Was born in the Hawaiian Islands, January 30, 1839; graduated at Williams College in 1862; was appointed Captain in the 125th New York Volunteers, and later Colonel of the 9th Colored Troops; was in charge of the Freedmen's Bureau at Hampton, Va., from 1866 to 1868; founded the Hampton Institute in 1868; and died at Hampton, May 11, 1893.

The school which he established and inspired holds each year a memorial service to mark its

Founder's Day



FOUNDER'S DAY AT HAMPTON

THIS day is reverently set apart by us to recall the life of our Founder, and to repeat to ourselves the lessons of his teaching. It is a familiar story which we love to tell to each other from year to year ; but it is a story very difficult to tell with the moderation of statement of which our Founder would approve. He expressly desired that no formal eulogy of him should be permitted. "The truth of a life," he wrote, "lies deep down." His searching eyes would look with reproach on any friends who should speak of him to-day with exaggerated praise. Yet, on the other hand, it is impossible to speak of General Armstrong at all without seeming to those who did not know him extravagant and uncontrolled. No one who was per-

FOUNDER'S DAY AT HAMPTON

mitted to observe his life can recall it without a thrill of reverent loyalty. Beyond any possibility of question our Founder was one of the half-dozen men of his generation in America who must be unqualifiedly described as great. His plans, his hopes, his habits of thought, his personality, gave at once the impression of greatness. He must be spoken of then to-day with all possible reserve of language; yet he cannot be spoken of at all without preliminary recognition that language, which in most cases would be mere undiscerning praise, is to-day severely restrained and scrupulously just. And fortunately for this demand laid upon us to hush our personal praise, we may tell our story to-day, not in terms of the man, but in terms of his work. For there are two ways in which an institution like this may have its beginning: it may begin with a plan, or it may begin with a man. Sometimes it happens that a college, or a church, or a phil-

FOUNDER'S DAY AT HAMPTON

anthropic scheme is first sketched on paper, then endowed with money, and finally supplied with a person. Such foundations, however, must remain unstable and insecure until the last step is taken and the man arrives ; and many a rich endowment has failed of its intention because it has failed to attach to itself a leader of men. Sometimes, on the other hand, such a work begins with a person. The man sees his heavenly vision and is obedient to it. He begins just where he is and with what he has, as if he resolutely said to his dream : "Because I live, ye shall live also." Then the work expands as the life of nature does. It is not built up, it grows. It puts forth its shoots and branches like a tree in spring, because at its heart there is the warmth of a personal power. Such a growth may in due time come to be a great institution with a world of routine and detail and mechanism ; but the mechanism of a work

FOUNDER'S DAY AT HAMPTON

thus inspired feels the personal quality within itself as the whirring wheels of a factory testify to the engine at its heart. I need not say to you that Hampton represents this natural expansion, from the vision of a man to the myriad branches of a great institution. In a degree almost unparalleled, I suppose, in American education, this great, busy, growing place is the incarnation of a person. Every step we take is taken in the thought of him. With every change we ask, "What would the General say to this?" At every enrichment of our resources and every evidence of worth and promise we say, "How the General would have rejoiced in this!" And each year we pause in the midst of our busy life and reverently keep our Founder's Day. This is our greatest blessing,—that we are not built upon a plan, but upon a man. You remember how the prophet Ezekiel in his vision of heaven saw about him a be-

FOUNDER'S DAY AT HAMPTON

wildering confusion of wheels, and of wheels in the middle of wheels. Within the wheels, however, he discerned the figures of living creatures ; and when the living creatures went, the wheels, he says, went by them ; and when the living creatures were lifted up, the wheels were lifted up, "for the spirit of the living creatures was in the wheels." That is the kind of mechanism in the midst of which we wait to-day. All about us are the wheels of hurrying activity, — yes, and other wheels in the middle of those wheels ; yet at the heart of it all there is a memory, a tradition, a hero ; and when the wheels go, they go by him ; and when he is lifted up to-day, our wheels are lifted up, for the spirit of the Founder is within the wheels.

It is not my purpose to-day to review in detail the movement of General Armstrong's life. Yet no one can recall his personal history without a new impression of the mysterious way in

FOUNDER'S DAY AT HAMPTON

which a living God sometimes unfolds before a man by slow degrees the special work which is to be given to that man to do. Looking back on General Armstrong's career we see him prepared by each step from its beginning for the destiny that was before him. Yet, how unconscious of that destiny must have been the young man himself! He was born two thousand miles away from his work, and the thought of serving the Negro or the Indian race could not in his youth have dawned upon his imagination. He was bred among the Berkshire hills in an atmosphere of quiet scholarship, and still his work was unrevealed. He entered the war as any other brave man did, without a thought of whither it was leading him. By degrees his mission began to call to him. "A day dream," he once wrote, "of the Hampton School nearly as it is, had come to me during the war a few times; once in camp during the siege of Rich-

FOUNDER'S DAY AT HAMPTON

mond, and once, one beautiful evening, on the Gulf of Mexico." "The thing to be done," he goes on, "was clear: to train selected Negro youths who should go out and teach and lead their people; to teach respect for labor, to replace stupid drudgery with skilled hands, and to these ends to build up an industrial system." Such a day dream, so described, calls back to one's mind a scene which many travellers remember with special emotion among the sacred places of Palestine. Back of the little town of Nazareth, there rises a high and isolated hill, from which a wonderful view spreads itself out on every side. Northward are the slopes of Lebanon; south, the hills of Judæa; east, the country beyond Jordan; and west, a glimpse of the Mediterranean Sea. Almost the whole extent of what we have come to call the Holy Land lies within the horizon. And here, as the traveller may reverently believe — here in his youth Jesus must

FOUNDER'S DAY AT HAMPTON

have sometimes come, after his day's work at the bench, and sat at sunset on the hilltop, and let his day dreams range out to the far horizon, and imagine a land and people which would be some day dedicated to the doing of his Father's will. So this young disciple of Jesus Christ, in his far wanderings on the Gulf of Mexico, and his long night watches before Richmond, dreamt his dream of a regenerated South. Then, at the end of the war, his opportunity came. The gospel says of Jesus Christ that when he began to be about thirty years of age the fulness of his time arrived. It was the same with this loyal follower, this good soldier of Jesus Christ. He was twenty-seven years old when the Freedmen's Bureau - District of Hampton was in 1866 given into his charge; and then the fulness of time for him had come. Just as the infancy in far-away Egypt, and the boyhood among the Rabbis in the temple, find

FOUNDER'S DAY AT HAMPTON

their interpretation in the maturer life of Jesus Christ, so the birth of this modern man in the remote Hawaiian Islands, and the nurture under the Rabbis of Williams College, had their part in shaping Armstrong's dream. What a strange thread of divine intention is here! American Christians are called to redeem a race in Polynesia. They find there a gentle, thriftless, dark-skinned people, sunk in superstition, and sacrificed to the vices of white men; and they teach this people industry, morality, thrift, manual labor, and spiritual religion. Then the time comes when another dark-skinned race in our own country, with many of the same traits and temptations, the victims again of the sins of white men, must be saved or leave our country the shame of the civilized world; and then from the Hawaiian mission in the far East comes the leader, as if again it were written, "Out of Egypt have I called

FOUNDER'S DAY AT HAMPTON

my son." "Those schools," wrote General Armstrong, "over which my father had a general oversight, suggested the plan of the Hampton School." To and fro across the wide Pacific move, like the swing of the pendulum of destiny, the mighty purposes of God. The bread literally cast upon the Polynesian waters returned to us after many days, and the problem of Polynesia dealt with by the father opened the way for the son to meet the greater problem of our own discouraged South.

Thus it was that this man was ordained of God to begin this work which is now his monument. And now the place is so stamped with his personality that to speak of the School is to speak of the man. Its practical aims are those which he inculcated. Its moral ideals are those which possessed him. When we describe the deeper life of Hampton, we are in reality looking into

FOUNDER'S DAY AT HAMPTON

the heart of the Founder, and telling the story of his hope. Let us try then to sum up this faith which the work thus inherits from the man. The articles of the Hampton creed may be, I suppose, summed up in three words: it is a school of labor, and of love, and of life. Its religion is first a gospel of work, and then a gospel of service, and finally a gospel of consecration. Its education is first of the will to labor, then of the heart to love, and then of the soul to live. Its salvation is first from idleness, and then from selfishness, and then from lifelessness. Let us look for a moment at each of these articles of our living faith.

The first note of the Hampton spirit is the gospel of work. We happen to have come upon a time when it is by no means rare to have work regarded, not as a blessing, but as a curse. Much of the industrial agitation of the present time is given to the lessening of work,

to the reducing of the hours of labor, to the providing of resources for leisure and rest. The world's work lies heavily on its shoulders, and rich and poor alike are eagerly looking for ways to escape the load. And I do not say that we are not in our day overburdened by the pressing demands of work. Certainly many a poor man runs grave risk at the present time of becoming little more than one cog in the vast machine of modern industry; and certainly many a rich man is being caught like a hopeless victim in the unyielding grasp of his own prosperity. Certainly the conditions of our labor need amendment, and the resources for our leisure need multiplying. Yet beyond all this readjustment of industry which the time demands there is now heard in our social life a new and threatening note. It is the note of contempt for work and of scorn of thrift. The times are, in the first place, breeding at one end

FOUNDER'S DAY AT HAMPTON

of the social scale an ever increasing number of the professionally dependent, mendicant, unemployed class — the men who, as was said of one of them, go out in the morning to look for a job with the fervent hope that they will not find it. This is one threatening product of the time, — the 45,000 or more men wandering to and fro about the land with the deliberate intention of living without working, and with an incapacity for work increasing with every month of determined disinclination. Yet the problem of the professionally mendicant becomes insignificant when one hears something of the same note among the honest workers of the world. Many an agitator to-day among what we have come to call the working-classes is so profoundly moved by the meagre earnings which work obtains, that he is tempted to cry out against the virtues of economy and thrift. "Thrift," said one such leader in my hearing, "is no

virtue; let the workingman save less, and let him demand more." Thrift to such a person, private savings, work after hours, work beyond what is demanded, tend to detach the worker from the wrongs of workers and make him chiefly concerned with his own advancement, his individual welfare, his savings-bank account. If, then, the workers of the world are to be massed against the despotism of their employers, let them think of work as a grievance, and of thrift as a peril. Nor does the depreciation of industry and thrift stop here. When one turns finally to the other end of the social order, does he not see there an increasing number of those who, by the thrift or luck of others, have no work to do, and have become a menace to our social life by their unthrifty, unproductive, ostentatious habit of life? And what is the special curse of the luxurious rich if it be not once more the temptation to

FOUNDER'S DAY AT HAMPTON

think of work as an evil from which they are happily set free. Very far away these persons seem to stand from the lot of the vagabond and tramp, and yet in reality there is a great likeness here. Both are of the professionally idle, laboriously unproductive type. Both are nomadic in their temper, indisposed to stay at home, progressively incapacitated for honest labor. The self-indulgent idle rich are but another and a dangerous detachment of the one army of the unemployed. Now over against all this modern tendency to think of work as an evil to be shunned, and of thrift as a dubious virtue, stands the working faith of Hampton. We believe in work not only as necessary to progress, but as itself a means of salvation. We believe in the moral uses of thrift and the spiritual efficacy of labor. We believe that the redemption from work that is mechanical, dehumanizing, and

FOUNDER'S DAY AT HAMPTON

benumbing is not by escaping from work, but by illuminating work with intelligence, dexterity, invention, economy, patience, and love. It is indeed an essential part of the great industrial warfare of the present time that the worker shall be guarded from oppressive conditions of work; but the great contributors of the labor question to-day are not those who shall lessen work, but those who shall make work worthy of a rational being, interesting, suggestive, skilful, effective; so that the more hours a man spends at his work, the happier he may be. When in the book of Genesis the man and woman were cast out of the garden of idleness and commanded to go to work, this was not in reality the curse of man, it was the beginning of man's redemption. The history of civilization began when the man first ate his bread in the sweat of his face. "The fall of man" — as has been said — "was a fall upward."

FOUNDER'S DAY AT HAMPTON

Hampton then stands for the dignity of labor, for the equal rights of the mind and eye with the imagination and brain, for the self-respect which is justified in any man when he has learned to do one thing well. The history of civilization has more than once demonstrated that social stability may depend on the existence in a nation of a substantial body of small proprietors endowed with the virtues of frugality, independence, manual skill, and domestic integrity. What a strange turn of the wheel of destiny it would be if, among the industrial changes of the coming time, which may tempt the individual to shirk the ways of thrift and prudence, and to sink his independent life in the movement of masses of men, it should some day come to pass that a race for which the nation once suffered so much, and which is now by its very exclusion from organized labor almost forced into habits of independent and frugal work, should come to be one of

FOUNDER'S DAY AT HAMPTON

the great conservative forces of the nation, holding us to private ownership, sound finance, honest politics, and public security!

The second article of the Hampton creed is, I need not say to you, the demand of unselfish love. Love, according to General Armstrong, is not sheer sacrifice, — the throwing away of life. "I never," he says in his last memoir, "gave up anything, or sacrificed anything in my life." What he is describing is a much more rational article of faith, — the satisfaction and happiness and self-fulfilment that are discovered in unselfish service. "What is commonly called sacrifice," said Armstrong, "is the best possible use of one's self and one's resources." To take one's work, that is to say, not as the way of gain alone, but as the way of service, that is to make one's work happy and effective. To come here, a Negro, working in the fields all day and

FOUNDER'S DAY AT HAMPTON

then working over one's book by night, — that is a very depressing and discouraging thing to do, if it be done for nothing more than the meagre chance of one's own distinction or display. But to pursue this hard, continuous work in the perfectly rational hope of being some day of some slight use in your village, or town, or county, as faithful teacher, as skilled mechanic, as spiritually minded minister, as incorruptible lawyer, — that creates an attitude toward work which redeems it from insignificance, and by day and night illuminates your monotonous tasks with the light of unselfish love. To come here an Indian, with your ambition set on an education which is to separate you from your own people, or to make you ashamed of your race, that is to find yourself re-acting from every lesson, and sighing for the liberty of the blanket and the plain. But to take up with your tasks because they are to contribute the capacity to

lift your people into clearer light and larger truth, — that is to see on each page of the spelling-book, and in each puzzling problem of the arithmetic, pictures of the future all aglow with beauty and hope. The gospel of Hampton, then, is not that of a sad and stern self-denial. It is of a glad and happy self-fulfilment. Hardly any visitor comes among you here and observes your life without being struck, first of all, by its quality of happiness. Here is a place not of hardship and cross-bearing, but of gayety, light-heartedness, content. Teachers do not seem to be here because this burden has been laid on them, scholars do not seem to go about their tasks solemnly as though driven to an unwelcome duty. Teachers seem to be here because they love to be, and scholars go singing to and fro upon their ways. You who live here become so wonted to this atmosphere of general cheerfulness that you hardly ask what

FOUNDER'S DAY AT HAMPTON

creates it. It is the natural product of the unselfish life. You are delivered here from the one great source of despondency and discouragement and despair, — the inevitably depressing thought of one's self, — and you are set free into the happy world of loving service. And so it does not make much difference whether you are doing the great things here or the small ones, for you are not thinking of what you achieve, but of what you give, and the quality of unselfishness equalizes and dignifies every service. What a direct inheritance is this from the untiring, self-effacing, humble service of the Founder! How extraordinary was the buoyancy and satisfaction he found in service which seemed so often unworthy of his great gifts! When we think of him going up and down throughout the North from year to year, with his hat in his hand, begging for a few dollars here and there for Hampton, it

seems at first sight wicked and shameful that he should have been permitted to waste his life in these menial tasks. Yet that was precisely where his greatness most appeared. He could do very humble things and find in them no sense of humiliation. He was a disciple of him of whom it was written: "He made himself of no reputation and took upon himself the form of a servant;" of him who, when he desired to teach his disciples how to follow him, girded himself with a towel and began to wash his disciples' feet. The quality of love knows neither great things nor small. Indeed, it never is quite sure when the great occasion has arrived; and sometimes what seem the smaller opportunities of such a life shine in the beholder's memory with a peculiar lustre. I suppose that every lover of General Armstrong recalls some special incident which seems most entirely typical of the man's life and heart. For my part,

FOUNDER'S DAY AT HAMPTON

I think oftenest of one of those scenes in his many begging journeys to the North. It was at a little suburban church far down a side street on one winter night in the midst of a driving storm of sleet. There was, as nearly as possible, no congregation present ; a score or so of humble people, showing no sign of any means to contribute, were scattered through the empty spaces, and a dozen restless boys kicked their heels in the front pew. Then in the midst of this emptiness and hopelessness up rose the worn, gaunt soldier as bravely and gladly as if a multitude were hanging upon his words ; and his deep-sunk eyes looked out beyond the bleakness of the scene into the world of his ideals, and the cold little place was aglow with the fire that was in him, and it was like the scene on the Mount that was not any less wonderful and glistening because only three undiscerning followers were permitted to see the glory. It was as

FOUNDER'S DAY AT HAMPTON

Browning wrote of the little chapel on the stormy night, where he took refuge from the rain, and amid the humble company the Lord Christ was revealed, and the worshippers said : —

“God who registers the cup
Of mere cold water for his sake
To a disciple rendered up
Disdains not his own thirst to slake
At the poorest love was ever offered;
And because it was my heart I proffered
With true love trembling at the brim,
He suffers me to follow him.”

I have not yet spoken directly of the third article of the Hampton creed, which is none the less the centre of the Hampton work as it was at the core of the Founder's career. I mean, of course, the quality of religious life inculcated here, the gospel of consecration. Yet I have in fact spoken of precisely this last trait of Hampton in all that I have thus far said ; for the very essence of Armstrong's religious life lay in its comprehensiveness, its uni-

FOUNDER'S DAY AT HAMPTON

versality, its penetration. He believed and taught that only a religiously consecrated man or woman could do the best work with the mind, or serve with an unswerving love the need of the world. Religion was not a part of life to him, it was the consecration of the whole of life. He did not scorn the forms of doctrine or habits of religion. "Prayer," he once wrote, "is the greatest power in the world." "My own prayer has been most weak, wavering, inconstant, yet it has been the best thing I have ever done." Immortality was not to him a speculative possibility. It was simply a way of life so natural to him that he thought of the life after death not with trepidation, but with simple childlike curiosity. "How will it all seem? Perfectly fair and perfectly natural, no doubt." His creed was short. "The shorter the better," he said, "Simply to Thy cross I cling, is enough for me." Now I do not dare

FOUNDER'S DAY AT HAMPTON

to say that we of the School, teachers, scholars, trustees, have entered far into this great naturalness and serenity of the Christian life, this wisdom, child-likeness, and simplicity which are in Christ. The limitations of prejudice, or tradition, or pride, or self-distrust are round us still. And yet, here is our faith; and we cannot be permanently associated with this work without entering, at least a little way, into the largeness, and beauty, and power of this comprehensiveness. Behind all the work of the hands in which Hampton believes, and all the love of the heart which it inculcates, stands ever the principle of consecration of the life. We do not expect to make good workers of things, or good lovers of men, unless we first make men and women whose lives are touched by the spirit of God. One of the most extraordinary facts about the teaching of Jesus Christ is this, that he came to his first disciples

FOUNDER'S DAY AT HAMPTON

not in their times of leisure or worship, but while they were doing their work, — their common, daily, imperative, unconsecrated work. He came to Peter and Andrew as they were casting their nets into the sea. He came to James and John as they were in the boat with their father mending their nets. He came to Matthew as he was sitting in his office at the custom-house. The old religion had come to them when they left their work and went up into the Temple to pray ; the new religion came to them just where they were and interpreted, illuminated, and transfigured their daily task. That is the religion of Hampton, — a religion for the class and the shop, for the prayer meeting and the dormitory, for the school when it is gathered here, and for the lonely schoolhouse in the Black Belt, and the lonely graduate in the Black Hills. And when we want to see this religious life uttering itself in labor and in love, then we look back

FOUNDER'S DAY AT HAMPTON

to the Founder, as we do to-day, to the measureless work and the abounding love which were the natural expression of an interior life hid with Christ in God.

Yonder he lies among his students, "where one of them would have been put had he died next." And what a symbol of his life is his grave! At its head is that huge block of volcanic stone brought from his island home; at its foot, that block of granite from the Berkshire hills where he was trained; and between the two,—always when I have visited the grave on our great days — and I doubt not, to-day, — flowers; the silent witnesses of many loving hearts. Was not that Armstrong himself — volcanic in his temperament, granitic in his character, and between the two many a flower of imagination and childlikeness and joy; a life of self-destructive energy like the upheaving of a mountain of fire, a steadiness and



FOUNDER'S DAY AT HAMPTON

strength as of one builded upon a rock, and between the two the charm and grace of a fragrant life? We pause and reverently ask that this great memory may continue in our midst. What joy it would give the Founder to see the expansion of his work to-day, — its wise direction in hands which ask nothing for themselves save that the work of the Founder shall be fulfilled in his name; its spirit still his spirit, and its future his memorial. What would he say to-day if he could look about him in his own self-effacing way upon a work greater than his own, but which his own made possible, except those great forward-looking, self-effacing words of his Master: "Greater things than these shall ye do because I go unto my Father."



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